

before he went away  
was to the Yolo County Fair  
and when she saw her first place blue ribbon  
she covered her face to hide her tears  
asked him to leave her alone with her pie for awhile  
and he carried their baby away to see the clown.  
The main reason, though, she told me she won  
was simply because those Gravenstein apples  
are the perfect sweet-tartness for pies.  
You don't have to add lemon or cinnamon or sugar or spice.  
That way  
all you taste are the apples.

#### BEEF AND BARLEY SOUP

A year ago my mother wouldn't eat soup  
not even Bouillabaise  
or Vichyssoise  
she called it goop  
only fit for people sick with flu  
or without teeth  
not agreeing with my soup theology  
or its St. Francis humanitarianism  
to feed all the people  
its Jesus way of healing  
until a few months ago  
when she became bedridden  
and the doctor prescribed soup  
so today I sauteed in olive oil and butter  
a diced filet mignon  
until it was crisp around the edges  
and then I added diced onion, garlic  
celery, green pepper  
stirfried until tender then  
added two quarts of beef stock  
three par-boiled, peeled  
and quartered tomatoes  
a little basil, bay leaf, parsley  
rosemary, thyme  
some carrots  
a cup of barley  
salt to taste  
and covered it all  
and simmered it for a hour  
until it was as thick as  
white polka-dotted velvet.  
The soup is good  
said my mother between bites  
was it hard to make she asked  
and I said no



not when you believe in soup  
and I smiled  
her conversion widening the river of my kitchen  
by a Nile.

#### WITHOUT GROUCHY OLD PREMINGER

Before my Aunt Lil and Uncle Jimmy  
sold their tract home, piano  
and the gold Cadillac  
with the white upholstery  
to go to Costa Rica to buy a cantina  
in the banana groves,  
my Aunt Lil had a white fox stole  
she wore low on her shoulders  
with a mother-of-pearl cigarette holder,  
highheel wedgies, and a white, tight sheath-dress.  
A very sexy lady.  
A Gypsy Rose Lee  
doing what she pleased  
without grouchy old Preminger.  
Aunt Lil and Uncle Jimmy didn't get rich, though,  
down in Costa Rica, which in English  
really means "rich coast,"  
and since I was just a kid at the time,  
it was none of my business  
what they did with all that money.  
But today, 25-some years later,  
my Aunt Lil tells me  
how it was too damn hot down there  
in that godforsaken place to wear her fox.  
So hot that the white satin lining  
stuck to her skin like Scotch tape;  
the scorpions and bugs  
were as big as her shoes  
and got right in bed with you --  
and she never got so sick  
of bananas in her entire life.

-- Joan Jobe Smith

Fountain Valley CA